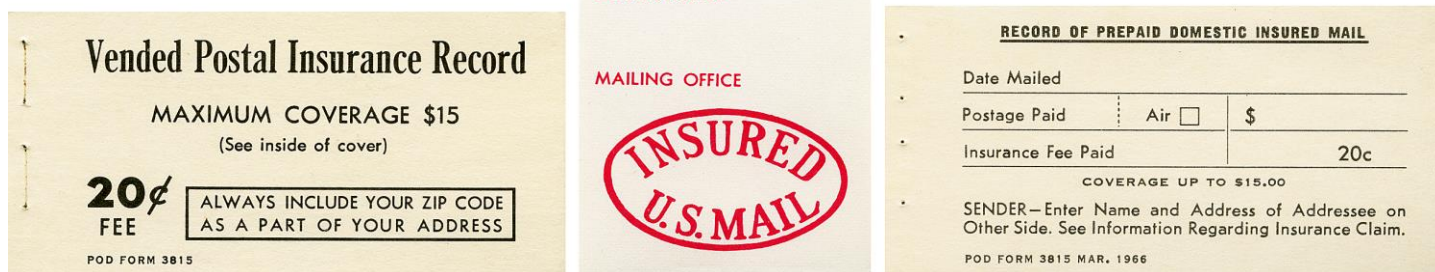


Exhibit Synopsis

U.S. VENDED POSTAL INSURANCE (1965-1985)

A FAILED EXPERIMENT



Background. In 1965, an experiment began to determine if postal insurance could be economically vended from machines at Self-Service Post Offices (SSPOs). The SSPO was a round-the-clock unattended unit, initially located in shopping center parking lots, but later in post office lobbies (SSPUs). You could buy an insurance stamp, fill out the receipt, and insure a parcel without standing in line at a post office.

Treatment. This exhibit presents a complete chronological study of the insurance booklets and stamps from their inception in 1965 to their removal from sale in 1985. It tells a story of how they were produced, sold, and used.

The exhibit contains a number of unique and rare items gathered from 26 years of research. There is an entire frame of the scarce 10-cent booklet. There are covers showing postal use of each insurance stamp. Specialty items include first and last day of use covers, EFOs, cutting marks, inspector stamps, box end labels, USPOD letters, and SSPO photos and brochures. Production similarities between insurance and regular postage booklets are shown. There is extensive coverage of the revalued booklets and their varieties.

Key items in the exhibit are highlighted with **purple text or matting**. Revalued booklets documented by the original purchaser are annotated with a purple star. ★

There are no known essays, proofs, or plate layouts, but the probable layout of the 20-cent booklet is displayed based on cutting marks. The exhibit is missing one of the 13 revalued varieties. It was described in a 1979 price list, but has not been seen. There were no first day ceremonies, but several first day of use covers are shown.

Importance. Postal Insurance is a major category of service, and the 20-year effort of the USPS to provide vended postal insurance to the public is a notable period in its history. Vended insurance is also an important chapter in the USPS goal of making postal products easily accessible. They were available in 1,500 SSPO/SSPUs by 1975.

Production and sales of vended insurance incorporated several innovations:

- first booklet pane to use moisture-resistant gum, eliminating the need for interleaves
- use of rouletting instead of perforations
- inclusion of an insurance receipt in the booklet
- use of color to differentiate stamp values
- authorizing local post offices to revaluated the booklets and stamps by using postage stamps
- A "Collect Souvenir Pages" advertisement that is unique to insurance booklets (50-cent book)

It is the study of the production, sale, and usage of this unusual postal innovation, and the discovery of many artifacts critical to telling its story, that gives importance to this exhibit.

Knowledge and Research. The materiel and information shown in this exhibit represents a huge advance over that previously available. Extensive research was performed against original source material – the archives of the BEP and USPS, plus the acquisition of hundreds of pages of research notes and correspondence of early collectors (Cheney, Bayless, Staweki, and Brown). Twelve stamp periodicals were scoured for pertinent articles.

The results of this research are published in references 1 and 2. Collaboration with the USSS

(continued on back)

Booklet Chairman resulted in several updates to the Scott catalog – expanded information on the 10-cent booklet, booklet/stamp varieties, and the revalued booklets, plus a redesignation from “insurance labels” to “insurance stamps”.

Less than 10% of the items in this exhibit came from any one source and none were originally purchased or created by the exhibitor. Many were obtained by mass mailings to booklet dealers and collectors; others came from targeted solicitations of authors of past postal insurance articles.

Rarity. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to produce a comparable exhibit. The basic stamps and booklets are easy to obtain, but several of the revalued booklet varieties are scarce. However, it's the postally used covers and ancillary material that is the most difficult. Intended to insure parcels, non-philatelic usage is rare, and even philatelic covers are difficult to find. Beginning with sales of 4,786 ten cent booklets, less than 5 million insurance booklets were sold over the next 20 years. A failure from the USPS point of view, but an opportunity for modern-day rarities.

About 200 postal insurance stamps covers were examined, all were determined to be philatelic (produced by or for a stamp collector or dealer), except for possibly 3 (pages **2-11**, **3-14** and **5-13**). Although technically “philatelic”, several covers had the stamp used for its intended purpose – to insure a parcel’s content. Collectors and dealers used them to mail philatelic merchandise (see parcel wrappers on **1-13**, **2-11**, **3-14** and **3-15**).

Revalued Booklets. An important aspect of vended insurance is revalued booklets, where a postage stamp was added to the insurance stamp to change its value. This revaluation was directed by the USPS, but since they were created by local post offices, many varieties exist. Although anyone with a pen and stamp could create their own variety, there is little evidence that this has been done. The revalued booklets in this exhibit were obtained from reliable sources and many are documented by the original purchaser (annotated with a ★). There are also examples where the revaluation has been validated by a dated cancel. Several unique and rare revaluations are not marked as key, because they are easy to create.

Select References:

1. Moll, Alan, *Postal Insurance Booklets (1965-1985)*, USSS Research Paper Number 16, available from the United States Stamp Society, March 1998, 50 pages
2. Moll, Alan, “United States Postal Insurance Booklets (1965-1985),” *The United States Specialist*, March 1998, pp. 103-118
3. Browne, Glen, “The Postal Insurance Labels,” *The American Philatelist*, June 1982, pp. 518- , (corrections and follow-up in October 1982, pp. 874-)
4. Cheney, Willis F., “The 10c Parcel Post Insurance Stamp”, *STAMPS*, July 9, 1966, pp. 62-63.
5. “Insuring Parcels at ‘Self-Service’ Offices”, April 30, 1966, *Western Stamp Collector*, pg. 11.